

McCrery-Shaw-et al. plan does zero to address the shortfall. It avoids the issue. It is what the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SHAW) called a "no-pain plan." It is a "duck-the-issue plan."

Essentially what the Republican plan proposed by the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. MCCREY) is, it is filled with gimmicks. We need honest talk, not more gimmicks.

IT IS TIME REPUBLICANS TAKE SOCIAL SECURITY PRIVATIZATION OFF THE TABLE

(Mr. MELANCON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MELANCON. Mr. Speaker, let me just say, first, before I start, you are doing a wonderful job this morning.

Mr. Speaker, last week, we learned how determined the majority party is to approve any Social Security reform bill as long as it includes privatization. Despite the fact that the American people have already rejected President Bush's privatization proposal, it appears that the Congressional Republicans are not willing yet to let privatization die.

The American people should know that this latest proposal is similar to the President's plan in several respects:

First, the new proposal would divert payroll contributions that are now being held for future beneficiaries into these risky, private accounts. By merely diverting Social Security funds, the plan would still force large benefit cuts on today's seniors and tomorrow's beneficiaries. And, just like the President's plan, the Republican legislative proposal does nothing to address the real issue facing Social Security, and that is solvency.

Mr. Speaker, the American people have seen what can happen to pensions and the stock market and how important a guaranteed Social Security benefit is to their retirement security. It is time that our Republican colleagues realize that privatization just is not going to fly, no matter how you pack-age it.

MISGUIDED PRIORITIES AT THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION

(Ms. BERKLEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. BERKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I was appalled to learn that a VA Undersecretary stated that the highest priority of the VA was to display a picture of the VA Secretary in every VA facility.

I was appalled, because that very day I also learned that the VA Secretary admitted that there was a \$1 billion shortfall in the veterans health care budget and that the administration knew this in April but presented their budget to Congress anyway, knowing that it was shamefully inaccurate and

inadequate to meet the health care needs of our veterans. They lied to Congress.

As a member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I saw firsthand the administration mock the veterans service organizations when they testified that the VA needed an additional \$1.2 billion to provide health care to our veterans. They defended their numbers, knowing that they were \$1 billion short.

One VA official said, upon learning that the highest priority was putting the VA Secretary's photo in every VA facility, "And here we are trying to figure out where our next patient meal is coming from and what furniture to sell to buy drugs next year."

Talk about misguided priorities.

SUPPORT PRESIDENT'S PROPOSAL TO REFORM SOCIAL SECURITY

(Mr. BARTON of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the President's proposal to reform our Social Security system. I also rise in support of the Members of the House of Representatives that have put forward a plan which would allow each individual in this country that is covered under Social Security to make a decision to have part of their payroll taxes invested in government securities, in U.S. Treasury bonds.

There are two differences between this proposal and the current law. Under current law, the surplus in the Social Security fund is invested aggregately in what are called Social Security Trust Bonds. Those are government bonds, except they are not marketable, and they are not in any individual's names.

The proposal that some Members of the House of Representatives propounded this week is to allow an individual to take parts of their individual payroll tax and invest it in a government security, a U.S. Treasury security in their name, which would be a marketable security.

I think this proposal is long overdue, and I rise first in strong support of the President's proposal to reform our Social Security program and in the proposal that the Members of the House have put forward.

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VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT REAUTHORIZATION

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to be an original cosponsor of the Violence Against Women Act reauthorization authored by the gentlewoman from California (Ms. ZOE LOFGREN).

I am very pleased to say that the Violence Against Women Act has been a success in terms of protecting women, but the statistics on domestic violence remain alarming. Nearly one in four women experiences at least one physical assault by a partner during her adulthood. It is important that we stand united in protecting women across America.

I am delighted that two of my provisions will be included in this legislation containing issues on DNA and trafficking. We can stand together to protect women around America, and I hope this Congress will be wise enough to move this legislation along quickly so that we can stamp out the devastation of violence against women.

As women are violated, children are impacted, and protecting families means protecting women; it means having strong laws.

Support the Violence Against Women reauthorization for it to be reauthorized and to be able to stand tall against violence and to stand for protecting the sanctity of the family and our children.

OPPOSE CUTS TO HOUSING PROGRAMS

(Mr. CLEAVER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CLEAVER. Mr. Speaker, later today, the House will consider the Transportation, Treasury, HUD, the Judiciary, District of Columbia, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act for 2006. While I commend the Committee on Appropriations for rejecting the President's Strengthening America's Communities Initiative, which would have transferred the Community Development Block Grant from HUD to the Department of Commerce for consolidation of 17 other programs, I am concerned with the gross underfunding of HUD programs in this bill.

The good and decent people around this Nation need to know that the Department of Housing and Urban Development's programs are primarily designed to address the housing and community development needs of disadvantaged communities. Unfortunately, the House bill slashed its funding for a number of vital Federal programs that have been central to the revitalization efforts underway in our Nation's cities, including Kansas City, Lee's Summit, and Independence, Missouri. The bill proposes to fund CDBG at \$250 million below fiscal year 2005 levels and provide zero funding for important programs such as section 108 loans, Youthbuild, Brownfields, Hope VI, and Empowerment Zones.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in opposing these cuts.

While we have all heard the Administration tout national homeownership rates, it is confusing because the House majority has proposed cutting programs that are designed to increase the homeownership rates for lower-income and minority households. These actions demonstrate that some in this legislative